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**Biceps, Bitches and Borgs: Reading *Jarhead's*  
Representation of the Construction of the (Masculine)  
Military Body**

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## **Biceps, Bitches and Borgs: Reading *Jarhead*'s Representation of the Construction of the (Masculine) Military Body**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between masculinity, the body and the military through a close reading of the film *Jarhead*. Drawing on a Foucauldian frame of analysis, we consider three performances of the masculine military body that form key aspects of the film's representational economy: the disciplined body, an outcome of the processes of basic training; the gendered body, realised through deployment of metaphors of the feminine to strengthen the masculine conception of the military body; and the cyborgian body, the result of the man-machine interface which is rapidly developing in many militaries around the world, and which poses significant questions for performances of military masculinity. We conclude by suggesting that the film's rendering of the material and discursive body reveals an unexpected tension between the expectations of military bodies and the lived experience of their labour. As well as augmenting empirical explorations of male-worker-bodies and analysing the occupation of soldier as requiring a unique kind of body work, our contribution to the body-organization literature turns upon the claim that docile military bodies are made fit for purpose, but may actually no longer have a purpose for which to be fit.

**Keywords:** body; Foucault; *Jarhead*; masculinity; military; representation.

## **Biceps, Bitches and Borgs: Reading *Jarhead*'s Representation of the Construction of the (Masculine) Military Body**

### **Introduction**

How do bodies become organized? How do we come to recognise them as such? And what are the implications of this organizing? These are the issues this paper seeks to address. We aim to explore the ways in which bodies are examined, categorised, judged, disciplined and augmented. How are they turned from perhaps fragile ends into durable means, into persistent and purposeful instruments of utility? And to what extent are these instruments actually of utility as a result? To do this analytical work we turn our attention to perhaps the most uniform of disciplined organizational performances: those of the masculine military body. Our starting point is how military subjects are made, encouraged and/or forced to become able and willing to undertake the labour which they are employed to deliver. In short, how are men made to engage in armed combat?

We tackle this question by locating our attention on the material and discursive body to examine how, through a number of formal and informal organizational practices, flesh previously marked as civilian is made fit for military purpose. We contend that the civilian body entering the military becomes 'disciplined,' 'gendered' and 'cyborgian' in carefully coded ways such that what emerges is a 'military body': a body capable of performing the labour that the organization requires of it. But we also suggest that the labour for which this military body has been rendered capable – engaging in armed combat, potentially ending in the taking of life - is increasingly

performed by the ever more sophisticated technologies of war, some located at a considerable distance from the battlefield itself, rather than by soldiers on the ground. We read these themes through the Hollywood film *Jarhead* (2005), directed by Sam Mendes.

The film proves particularly valuable as a data source because it is based on the autobiography of a former US Marine, Anthony Swofford, played in the film by Jake Gyllenhaal. As such, in its re-presentation of an already mediated representation of an organizational member's experiences of his labour, *Jarhead* offers rich and novel insights into the blurring of the fact and the fiction of the military. It recounts Swofford's initial socialisation into the Marine Corps, and latterly his initiation into the theatre of war during the first Gulf War. Focusing on Swofford's platoon of highly trained scout snipers, under the direction of Staff Sergeant Sykes (Jamie Foxx), the film depicts their move up to the front line, and culminates in the war's end just a few days later. The narrative tracks these events from a soldier's point of view, and offers an 'in the round' account from basic training onwards as compared to other filmic representations of military labour. In other words, *Jarhead* follows Swofford's progress starting with basic training through to his experience of warfare, whereas most other films tend to focus on either early military socialisation (eg, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, 1982) or warfare (eg, *Saving Private Ryan*, 1998), not both.<sup>1</sup>

We begin the paper proper by situating our discussion against the backdrop of Foucault's thinking on the body, discourse and discipline, before considering how the body has been apprehended in organization studies. We establish our contribution to this literature as 1. an extension of empirical studies of the male-worker-body; 2. a

focus on the occupation of soldier as demanding particular types of physicality and a unique type of ‘body work’ - combat; and 3. an analysis of the discipline which perhaps ‘makes’ the masculine military body no longer apposite in conditions of contemporary warfare. Then we move to discuss the film as a source of data, proposing an argument in support of popular culture as an important resource in understanding the world of work and organization. In particular, we draw on Rhodes and Parker’s (2008) notion of a ‘cultural studies of organization’ in order to justify our claims about the film’s importance to organizational analysis.

Our third substantive section adds flesh to our theoretical perspective by analysing three performances representative of the transformation of the masculine military body within the filmic narrative of *Jarhead*. We consider the production of the ‘disciplined body’, the process through which the civilian body becomes literally incorporated into the military through the practices of ‘basic training’. Then we consider more specifically issues surrounding the production of the ‘gendered body’ and how spectres of the feminine serve to strengthen the masculine conception of the military body. Finally, we focus on representations of the ‘cyborgian body’ and the increasingly extensive man-machine interface that re-imagines the actors in the military and movie theatres in which they are re-presented. This allows us to explore *Jarhead*’s rendering of the implications of this relationship for performances of contemporary military masculinity. We conclude by suggesting the film’s rendering of the discursive and material body reveals that these docile military bodies which are made fit for purpose perhaps no longer have a purpose for which to be fit. These bodies may therefore – we suggest - allow us to ask different sorts of questions regarding the limits of bodily discipline as an organizing practice.

## Theorising the ‘Organized’ Body

We begin our review with a summary of the foundational contribution made by Michel Foucault to studies of the body at work. Across a range of texts, particularly *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (1976) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault develops a line of thinking which argues that the body is best apprehended through attention to the history of its constitution through discourse:

In becoming the target for new mechanisms of power, the body is offered up to new forms of knowledge. It is the body of exercise, rather than of speculative physics; a body manipulated by authority, rather than imbued with animal spirits; a body of useful training and not of rational mechanics, but one in which, by virtue of that very fact, a number of natural requirements and functional constraints are beginning to emerge (Foucault 1977: 155).

For Foucault, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries marked a period in which a new ‘political anatomy’ of the body was born; one that served as a ‘mechanics of power’ through which bodies could be surveilled, managed and made useful. With the increasing migration of populations from the countryside to the city the body became a key tool through which the masses could be controlled and disciplined. This disciplining was not achieved through violent coercion but through a more subtle mix of practices and techniques that worked on the individual subject, drawing them inward toward a position of subordination to a system which was then able to render useful the actions of that subject. This produced ‘docile bodies’: “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136).

But how is such docility achieved? For Foucault, discipline does not just act upon *but materialises through* the fleshly body. It creates what he calls an ‘aptitude,’ a ‘capacity’ (1977: 138), as the following example suggests:

Let us take the figure of the soldier as it was still seen in the early seventeenth century. To begin with, the soldier was someone who could be recognised from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and his courage, the marks, too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength and valour; and although it is true that he had to learn the profession of

arms little by little – generally in actual fighting – movements like marching and attitudes like the bearing of the head belonged for the most part to a bodily rhetoric of honour. ... By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has got rid of the ‘peasant’ and given him ‘the air of the soldier’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 135).

This of course is an instructive example for the discussion at hand since it focuses on the making of *military* bodies, although Foucault argues that this conception of discipline had a wider applicability, across a range of institutional sites. In his analysis, the body is always unstable: it is not an historical given. It is not comprised of ‘animal spirits’ and ‘rational mechanics’. Instead the self must be invoked as a vehicle through which control is enacted on the body. The ‘aptitude’ produced by discipline both enhances the power of the body, by making it more controllable, and extends the disciplinary practices that created it so that it becomes the dominator, controller and discipliner of the body through which it was materialised. This is capacity *of and through* self-discipline. As such the power exercised over the ‘social body’ is productive, not merely repressive: it ensures that things get done, that order is maintained and that labour is productive. This disciplinary power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (*ibid.* p. 39).

These seminal ideas have gradually sedimented in the study of work and organization over the last two decades, as it has begun to pay increasing attention to the body. Contemporary organizational scholarship, taking its cue more or less explicitly from Foucault, recognises that the myriad differences we see between bodies and their everyday conduct, in organizations and elsewhere, cannot be reduced to biology, to essential ‘spirits’ and ‘mechanics’. The range of body practices undertaken (for example, drills and weapon training in the military) and the range of bodily



performances thus enabled (such as the habitual, almost unthinking firing of a gun on the battlefield) are far too diverse, fragmented and fluid to legitimise any such position.

In the body-organization literature, then, the body is typically understood as the receiver, not the creator, of social meaning. It is governed, 'made possible', through a range of institutional practices and discourses; not in the sense that cultural norms are somehow 'written on top of' an *a priori* body, but because we cannot understand, articulate or use our bodies outside such practices and discourses (Butler, 1993, p. 10). Drawing on these Foucauldian themes around our corporeal yet always and already discursively inscribed flesh, one of the key trajectories in this literature has been an empirical consideration of how (and indeed whether) the body becomes fit for work. This might be through deliberate organizational socialisation and/ or a wider and less tangible process of self-discipline in accordance with discursive norms. As Sinclair (2005, p. 388) avers,

A good deal of research on bodies ... shows how people are trapped in bodily performances by wider relations of power and discourse. They are played out in gender regimes (appropriately masculine and feminine performances), class-based assumptions (shopfloor versus managerial masculine performances), and around socially and culturally constructed taboos.

And, as Shilling (2003, p. 49) reminds us,

There have been repeated attempts to limit women's civil, social and political rights by taking the male body, however defined, as 'complete' and the norm and by defining women as different or inferior as a result of their unstable bodies. Women were supposedly confined by their biological limitations to the private sphere, while only men were corporeally fit for participating in public life.

Thus, given the western imaginary's enduring insistence that female bodies are Other, reproductive not productive, unruly and generally threatening to the 'rational order' of the 'masculine' organization, much scholarship focuses on how women are expected

to manage, use and present their bodies for and at work and/ or how others react to their bodies in this context. While what follows is not an exhaustive list, these themes appear in Sheppard's (1989) study of female managers; Trethewey's (1999) research into professional women; Baxter and Hughes's (2004) vignettes from academia and the IT industry; and Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan and Somerville's (2005) autoethnography of female scholars. We can also locate them in Haynes's (2008, 2011) analysis of the body projects of female accountants and lawyers; and Gatrell's netnography of the pregnancy-employment nexus. Muhr's (2011) work is likewise exemplary in suggesting that senior women managers may (re)produce impossible bodily expectations for others in their apparently flawless combination of extreme masculinity and extreme femininity.

But the body-organization literature also identifies how women's bodies are constructed and strategically deployed as sources of organizational value-added, as offering eroticised or nurturing or glamorised forms of embodied capital; especially in 'feminine' occupations. Female workers, then, may be encouraged to play on and augment their supposedly natural biological characteristics just as frequently as subduing them. Empirical data from the sex industry, for instance, clearly indicates that women workers have to become very physically skilled (in fellatio, say) as well as needing to look like 'real women' – carefully made-up, slim, toned, tanned (eg, Brewis and Linstead, 2000; Sanders, 2005; Kong, 2006; Mavin and Grandy, 2011). In contrast, Oerton's (2004) therapeutic massage practitioners strive in their workplace dress, bodily demeanour and hands-on practice to present as emotionally literate professionals *and* "pure and untainted" by any discursive associations with sexual massage (page 555). Elsewhere, Tyler and Abbott's (1998) female flight attendants

are frequently weighed during grooming checks - their male colleagues are not – apparently to ensure that they literally embody their occupation; and Pettinger’s (2005) retail assistants must “manifest particular forms of gendered embodiment ... according to the brand strategies of the organization they are employed in” (page 460).

There is, additionally, evidence of women’s resistance to broad socio-cultural and specific organizational norms in their bodily comportment at work – betokening a kind of ‘unfitness’ for work, if you will. Examples include McDowell and Court’s (1994) study of merchant banks, which quotes a woman who at times deliberately dressed to confound her male colleagues (page 745). Bennett’s (2000) account of equal opportunities officers argues that these women have “been compelled to find ways of legitimating their different embodied position in the organization, through spatial, behavioural and verbal strategies” (page 201). And Phillips and Knowles (2010) travel similar terrain in their analysis of novels featuring women entrepreneurs and “how fiction can [both] challenge and collude in dominant constructions of entrepreneurship, which is more usually gendered as male and masculine” (page 1).

To summarise this research through our Foucauldian lens, here the female body is understood more or less as a “force of production” (Foucault, 1977, p. 26; also Marsden, 1998). This body is identified as organizationally useful to the extent that it is “invested with relations of power and domination”. It evolves into a “productive body” because it is also and already a “subjected body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). The productive body thus appears as the concrete labouring body, a combination of flesh and idealised abstractions via a “political technology of the body” (Foucault, 1977, p.

26; again also Marsden, 1998). It becomes a force of production through techniques of examination, categorisation, judgement, discipline and the re-presentational augmentation that technology of various kinds – both simple and complex - enables.

What is it that our analysis adds to this strand of body-organization research, then? To begin with, the relevant scholarship has certainly not neglected the male body. Much of the work discussed above by its very nature at least indexes male bodies as a comparator. Other projects explicitly seek to contrast male and female bodies. These include Lan (2001) whose Taipei data focus on the “microphysics of labor control” (p. 85) as they constitute the bodies of men and women selling cosmetics; Sinclair (2005) who compares the ‘body practices’ of one male and one female leader in bringing about radical change; Hancock and Tyler (2007) on images in corporate recruitment documents; and Schilt and Connell (2007) discussing transgendered men and women’s workplace transition experiences.

To these we can add Bowring’s (2009) analysis of how embodiment informs leadership in nursing and the military; Van den Brink and Stobbe’s (2009) ethnography of earth science students; Dyer, McDowell and Batznitsky (2010) on how migration intersects with gender in the management and labour of London hotel workers; and Simpson’s (2011) study of how male and female nurses talk about each other. There are also empirical studies focusing primarily on male bodies – for example, of bouncers, hairdressers, fire-fighters and estate agents (Monaghan, 2002; Hall, Hockey, & Robinson, 2007). However, the female body is indubitably more common subject matter in such discussions, and so there is more which remains to be said about its male counterpart.

The occupation of soldier is also a critical case for the study of the body at work. It demands high levels of physical strength, endurance and discipline, as well as the capacity to withstand unpleasant, dangerous, oftentimes lethal working conditions, all of this being characteristic of a certain kind of discursively-produced masculinity. Relatedly, being a successful soldier implies a unique type of what is described in the literature as ‘body work’ or ‘body labour’ - “labor performed on behalf [of] or directly on other peopl[e’s] bodies” (Gimlin, 2007, p. 358, following Kang; also see Cacchioni & Wolkowitz, 2011; Twigg, Wolkowitz, Cohen, & Nettleton, 2011; Wolkowitz, 2010). A soldier’s body labour is understood to involve, amongst other things, armed combat - which may necessitate killing or maiming other bodies. Our analysis deals directly with these expectations of soldiers, which we argue are not well travelled in the relevant research, but have the capacity to illuminate other less extreme instances of the socialisation and experience of the male-worker-body.

And our analysis here adds something else; a focus on the extent to which this particular case of the socialisation of the male-worker-body actually produces what we referred to earlier as ‘instruments of utility’ in the context of today’s warfare. This is not an argument which indexes resistance amongst the subjects who are subject to this form of discipline, but rather one that asks questions about the functionality of the discipline itself; no matter how successful it might be in producing docile military bodies. The body-organization literature, at least as far as we understand it, has thus far been silent on this specific issue – in the military and beyond. We return to this issue in our conclusion.

To reiterate, in this paper we consider the ways in which the transformation of the masculine body for perhaps no longer relevant military ends is represented in a recent Hollywood product, examining three specific bodily performances in the film *Jarhead*. Before we move to this central task, we consider the status of a popular cultural product such as *Jarhead* as an empirical source and more particularly what variations in our views of the status of such products mean for the readings that we can make of them.

### **Reading Popular Culture into Organizational Analysis**

In an important contribution to an earlier issue of this journal, Phillips (1995) makes a persuasive argument for the relevance of popular culture as not only a source of data for explorations of work and organization but also an important resource for the performance of (organizational) identity. Since then, a significant body of literature has developed, underpinned by a range of different conceptual perspectives and contextual concerns, that has come to inform what Rhodes and Parker (2008) call a 'cultural studies of organization'. Examples from this literature include Knights and Willmott's (1999) exploration of managerial identity read through novels; Parker's numerous studies, such as his reading of global business using fictional texts about pirates (2009a), his study on organizational culture and identity as presented in the television show *The Sopranos* (2009b) and his analysis of America's industrial development through the figure of the cowboy and the imagery of the 'Wild West' (2011). Elsewhere, both Rhodes (2002) and Ellis (2008) have used cartoons, *South Park* and *The Simpsons* respectively to explore issues of global capitalism (for other

examples see Bell, 2008; Clegg & Hardy, 1996; Godfrey, 2009; Godfrey & Lilley, 2009; Hassard & Holliday, 1998; Rhodes, 2007).

Significant to the development of this cultural studies of organization has been the maintenance of an argument, based on ‘empirical observation’, for the relevance, value and importance of popular cultural texts in understanding, illuminating and even explaining the worlds of work and organization. As Rhodes and Parker (2008) argue, that which is regularly reduced to the banal, the unimportant, the trivial, whether it be the latest episode of the TV show *24*, a rerun of the political drama *The West Wing* or yet another ‘satirical’ cartoon series, is often more relevant and referenced in the everyday language and practice of organization than even the best selling ‘business’ texts.

Of course, to simply restate that popular culture re-presents the world of work and organization is neither original nor in itself particularly productive. What is important is the way in which specific types of work and organization come to be constructed through these texts, and the discursive effects they might produce. For example, it is not the case that one of us finds the film *Disclosure* inherently interesting but rather that, through its portrayal of workplace relations between men and women and its narrative on sexual harassment, this filmic text may have generated “subjectifying effects among those who were exposed to it” (Brewis, 1998, p. 97).

Such ‘subjectifying effects’ may be felt even more keenly in situations in which the organization or practice is further removed from everyday experience. Parker (2009b), for example, argues that the fact and the fiction of the Mafia as a business

organization are so intertwined that the two cannot easily be separated, even amongst Mafioso who repeatedly draw on mediated representations of themselves to enact their organizational performances. Not unlike the Mafia in certain respects, the military is still, relatively speaking, a largely secret organization, not readily accessible to the public. As such, wider perceptions of this organization are frequently informed by its mediated representations. Indeed, as Bell tells us,

by offering a rich source of documentary and dramatic material ... film enables a vicarious experience for the viewer which acts as a substitute for personal experience ... and so provides a 'safe' way of learning what it feels like to work in an organization at different historical moments and in different cultural contexts (2008, p. 1).

It is also worth noting that the military actively employs popular cultural representations of itself in the training of new recruits, as evidenced in numerous autobiographies of serving soldiers. For example, in Patrick Hennessey's autobiography of his time as a British Army officer, he discusses at length how, during his commissioning course, clips from war films formed a regular part of the curriculum: from the strategy and tactics in *Gladiator* (2000) through the horrifying 'realities' of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) to the training scenes in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Hennessey even recalls how such texts then informed organizational performance. In relation to the US TV series *Band of Brothers* (2001), for example, he notes that "Damian Lewis is, basically, the 'perfect' officer; our platoon commander had got confused and thought he was supposed to emulate David Schwimmer's odious character" (Hennessey, 2009, p. 55).

Our argument, therefore, is that there is something potentially meaningful, something relevant to our understanding of the military that might emerge through its mediated representation. We suggest that *Jarhead* constitutes an important text for exploring a range of organizational issues which are difficult to access through more 'traditional'



research approaches. The first of these is the processes and practices through which the civilian body is made useful for military service. We call this the ‘disciplined body’.

### **The Disciplined Body**

Swofford: Jarhead: noun. Slang for ‘Marine.’ Origin: from the resemblance to a jar of the regulation high-and-tight haircut. The Marine’s head, by implication, therefore also a jar. An empty vessel (*Jarhead*, 2005, Universal Pictures)

This section considers how the material body is disciplined into military service; that is, how certain discourses of discipline and militarism are marked upon it and how it is – apparently - made fit for military purpose. In this way, and following Kovitz (2003), we problematise essentialist notions of innate male violence and argue instead for the importance of the practices of military training that ‘produce’ the military subject. We seek to understand these processes of modification by using Foucault’s strategies of discipline and his notion of the docile body.

For Foucault, the means by which discipline is achieved requires first that bodies be carefully distributed in space, set apart as orderable wholes, made individual. This “art of distribution” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136) of bodies requires that they be enclosed in sealed environments, away from the rest of society. These bodies should then be partitioned into specific, visible spaces. Within that space each should be given specific tasks to accomplish and be ranked against other bodies. The second practice of discipline is the need to “control the activity” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136) of the body through the careful management of the tasks assigned to it. The body should be subject to a precise measurement of time; all activities need to be broken down into their component parts, learnt assiduously and repeated exhaustively, through the

deployment of exercises. To illustrate this process Foucault (1991, p. 136) draws upon the equestrian notion of dressage. Finally, the third practice of discipline – the “composition of force” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136) - requires that bodies should be deployed in such a way that every component can be utilised without waste:

The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principal variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements. The soldier is above all a fragment of mobile space, before he is courage or honour (Foucault, 1977, p. 164).

Within the context of the military, through the process of basic training, we would also suggest that these disciplinary techniques of ‘the art of distribution,’ ‘control of activity,’ and ‘composition of force’ not only make the body docile, malleable and therefore useful. They also work to foster processes of ‘separation’ from civilian life, ‘identification’ with the military organization and its masculine culture and ‘preparation’ for the realities of the demands of this form of labour. Below, in order to elaborate this position, we draw together these three processes with Foucault’s practices of discipline through a reading of the opening scenes of *Jarhead*.

#### *The Art of Distribution, and the Instigation of Separation and Identification*

The practices through which the civilian body is “incorporated” (Armitage, 2003, p. 3) into the military organization are fundamental to the construction of military masculinity. The process begins during the initial stages of military participation, through basic training. This period of instruction, which all new recruits undertake, is focused on the modification of the physical body and on the socialisation of the recruit into certain discourses of militarism and (military) masculinity. It is a crucial period in the transformation of the civilian into the soldier and, as seen in *Jarhead*, begins the moment one passes through the barracks’ gates.

In the opening scene of *Jarhead* we are presented with a depiction of the disciplinary architecture of the military barracks. Inside, each new recruit is standing in exactly the same position; in front of his bed space. A yellow line, drawn on the floor, determines the exact placement of his feet. Each recruit is dressed in exactly the same outfit; camouflage fatigues. Each has the same regulation haircut. Each recruit's bed space is laid out like every other. The furniture is the same, as is the bedding, the way the bed is made, even its position. All the walls are painted white. Within this room there is no idiosyncrasy. There is no personalising of private space; indeed there *is* no private space. Each man is visible, on display to those around him. This distribution of space is a fundamental component of military discipline. The architecture of the barracks represents a process of partitioning. Each individual is assigned a specific space, one for which they are accountable, one by which they will be measured, judged and ranked.

The barracks fulfils an additional purpose, one beyond enclosure and partitioning. It serves to break down any perception of the individual outwith the requirements of the military body. The recruit must identify with the unit, with the corps or regiment, and with the military organization above and beyond anything else. This point is made in the *Jarhead* scene during an exchange between the Drill Instructor (DI) and one of the new recruits. The same dialogue also serves to introduce the notion of separation, specifically from civilian life:

DI:	You! I can't believe my fucking eyes! Did you just piss your pants boy?
Recruit:	Sir, yes, sir!
DI:	Where'd you learn to piss your pants? From your mama?
Recruit:	Sir, the recruit's mother is dead, sir!
DI:	Outstanding! That's one less bitch I got to worry about, calling her senator 'cause her lame-dick son can't handle my Marine Corps!

Recruit: Sir, my mother was not a bitch, sir! I am not a lame dick and I can handle your Marine Corps, sir!  
DI: Did I hear you say “I”? Did I hear you say “my”?  
Recruit: Sir, yes, sir!  
DI: There is no “I” here! There is no “my”! You are nothing! I own your ass, all of you! Your mamas and your daddies are dead! This is your fucking family now! Black, White, Mexican, Vietnamese, Nava-fucking-jo! The Marine Corps does not care! ... You are no longer black, or brown, or yellow or red! You are green! You are light green or dark green! Do you understand?

[In unison the whole barracks replies: Sir, yes, sir!]

The final lines from the DI are instructive in thinking though how the military considers notions of individuality. Sam Mendes, the director of *Jarhead*, picks up on this point in his DVD commentary when he explains that “I wanted to capture the disinterest they have in the notion of the individual. There’s a reason everyone looks the same, has the same haircut and there are very few insignias on the uniforms and that is because in the psychology of the Marine Corps everyone is serving something bigger than themselves.”

This practice of fostering identification with the military is reinforced through certain signifying practices deployed within the military organization; one such example being uniforms. Clothing often serves as a marker of individuality. The standardisation of military dress seeks to break down such notions. As Morgan (1994) notes, the uniformity of uniform displaces idiosyncrasy, individuality and particularity. As a result, “the disciplining of a body of men is at the expense of individual bodies” (p. 72). Schneider (1997) offers a further insight into the nature of uniform. Specifically, it reinforces particular conceptions of masculinity. The design and cut of the uniform focuses attention on specific parts of the body: tight and pulled in at the waist but exaggerated at the shoulders to present a certain image of the body beneath. The uniform also serves as signifier of rank:

[R]ank: the place one occupies in a classification, the point at which a line and a column intersect, the interval in a series of intervals that one may traverse one after the other.

Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations (Foucault , 1977, pp. 145-146).

Rank is a key disciplinary technique in the military. Combined with partitioning, it enables a large numbers of bodies to be distributed in manageable ways; into regiments, companies, platoons, sections and so on. Such practices enable other disciplinary techniques to emerge, such as the instigation of rivalry and the fostering of competition amongst units.

As suggested, though, the *Jarhead* scene outlined above not only considers the issue of identification but also illuminates the notion of separation: “This is your fucking family now!” says the DI. Separating the new recruit from their family and friends, both physically and metaphorically, socialises them into military culture and fosters docility. This is achieved through techniques such as the restriction of communication with the outside world. In *Jarhead*, we see a number of other references to the process of separation. Later in the opening scene, the DI addresses Swofford directly:

DI:	Do you have a girlfriend, Swofford?
Swofford:	Sir, yes, sir!
DI:	Guess again, motherfucker! Jody’s banging her right now!

Later Troy (Swofford’s ‘spotter’) will comment that “If the Corps wanted you to have a wife they would have issued you one”.

These scenes employ a narrative that attaches an importance to the military unit above and beyond any external ties and relationships. The recruit must separate himself (sic) from the outside world and identify with the unit. The importance of doing this is, partly, in preparation for the unique form of labour that these bodies will eventually undertake – at least in theory.

### *Control of Activity, Exercise and Preparation*

As we have argued above, the role of the soldier as it is usually conceived is, first and foremost, to engage in armed combat. Ultimately this may mean killing and the possibility of being killed. As such, the extreme nature of military training can be read as preparation for this extreme form of labour. Such labour, in turn, requires that the military subject enact extreme forms of behaviour; behaviours that challenge some of the basic rules of civilised society. Military training seeks to instil these behaviours through its techniques of discipline. One key speech in *Jarhead* sums up this point succinctly. Sergeant Sykes, leading the recruits through a live firing training exercise, comments “We’ve all been taught that ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ But hear this: Fuck that shit!”.

A further function of basic training is to put the recruit in situations of stress, of deprivation, to ‘break them down and build them up’ so they are prepared for the potential realities of their employment. One of the key mechanisms by which this is achieved is through the ‘control of activity’. Every part of the waking day is carefully timetabled in basic training. The skills and techniques of the job are meticulously broken down into their component parts. There is a “correlation of body and gesture” and “body and object” (Foucault, 1977, 152).

Practices such as drill and weapons training exemplify this process. The body must learn to move in prescribed ways. It must control its actions in ways laid down by military practice. There is an “instrumental coding of the body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 152). Such practices help detach the recruit from the full realities of their labour. By

breaking down the firing of a weapon into its individual stages it becomes more readily perceived as a technical skill to master rather than an instrument of death. This is reinforced through such practices as shooting competitions, and the encouragement of technological expertise through the ability to dismantle and clean one's weapon in the shortest possible time. The repetitive nature of such practices also facilitates the action becoming 'second nature' so that under pressure the soldier does not need to 'think'. This point is well made in Swofford's opening voice-over:

Swofford: A story. A man fires a rifle for many years and he goes to war. And afterwards, he turns the rifle in at the armoury and he believes he's finished with the rifle. But no matter what else he might do with his hands, love a woman, build a house, change his son's diaper, his hands remember the rifle.

The rifle, and by extension the military, have left a mark on the soldier's body that cannot easily be erased.

This focus, this attention to exacting details, permeates all aspects of basic training. Even the 'correct' placement of items in one's footlocker can be read as a disciplining technique that prepares the recruit for war. To explain what we mean we must return to the barracks scene in *Jarhead*: here Swofford is being berated by the DI for the drawing of the footlocker that he has presented, and the following dialogue takes place:

DI: What the fuck is this?  
Swofford: Sir, it's a recruit's drawing of a footlocker, sir!  
DI: Jesus, Joseph and doggie-style Mary! That is a pile of dog shit!  
Swofford: Sir, the recruit's never been good at drawing, sir!  
DI: Why the fuck are you my scribe, then? Isn't a scribe supposed to know how to draw?  
Swofford: Sir, the recruit doesn't know! The recruit thought the scribe was supposed to write, sir!

[The DI grabs Swofford by the throat.]

DI: Of course the recruit doesn't know! The recruit doesn't know because I haven't told him! All right cum-for-brains [the DI begins to rhythmically slap Swofford across the head] show me exactly where your skivvies and running shoes go.

Swofford: Sir, the recruit can't think while the drill instructor is hitting him on the head, sir!  
DI: You can't think while I'm giving you a few love taps? How the fuck are you going to fire your rifle when grenades are going off in your face?

[At which point the DI proceeds to crash Swofford's head into the blackboard and the soundtrack kicks in with "Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin.]

The scene is both humorous and disturbing. It is disturbing because of the physical violence enacted on the recruit and humorous because of how the lesson is administered, and thus revealing of the dark comedy of the military organization. But the final line from the DI underlines the purpose of his behaviour. How would the recruit manage under pressure when the sheer physicality of war is upon him?

This scene also highlights the ritual humiliation of the recruit. Whether it is the DI pulling up the first recruit for involuntarily urinating or how Swofford is treated later on, humiliation appears to be a fundamental aspect of military training (and therefore discipline). Anthony Swofford and screenwriter William Broyles pick up this theme in their DVD commentary: they note how humiliation serves a purpose in military training. It serves to draw individuals into the group – if they can cope with it. If not, they leave the military. Either way it is a productive technique.

The final disciplinary component of preparation for the soldier's unique body labour is exercise. In the military, much of the working day (and night) is spent 'on exercise' preparing for military activity in a range of scenarios and situations. Indeed this attention to preparation for military action through exercise, in place of actual combat, becomes an underlying tension in *Jarhead*. It is an issue that comes to an explosive conclusion in the final scenes of the film. We take up this theme in the last two sections of this paper. For now we summarise our discussion of the disciplinary



effects of basic training and the emergence of the productive military body.

### *Composition of Force and the Emergence of The Military Body*

The culmination of basic training is the 'passing out' parade: a symbolic gesture in which the recruit passes from civilian life into the military organization. The image is a vivid one: a mass of individual bodies, now masters of the exercises in which they have taken part over and over again, their physical movement refined under conditions of control. All are dressed uniformly and moving uniformly. What has emerged, through the practices of discipline, is the military body: a singular body composed of many docile and productive bodies. Each individual becomes one more component part of the final mechanical whole and, whilst each is necessary for the smooth operation of the military machine, the techniques of discipline are such that their bodies exist within a network of overlapping bodies. All are capable of substituting for the others.

Taken together, the technologies and practices of military training, the disciplined activity and physical development, the strict regime and exacting standards that have to be met and the division of labour produce this single military body. As such, if one part of the military machine breaks down it can instantly be replaced by another body. The result is, as Saltman notes, a situation in which "The soldier's body can be rendered a riddled sack or cut to shreds with shrapnel but there is another one coming from behind the hill. This body can be killed but cannot die" (2003, p. 58).

In sum, regardless of the function or task, the military subject must be fit for purpose. To this end a great deal is invested in the disciplining of the civilian body when it

enters the military organization. What emerges is a docile, uniform, military body, one free of idiosyncrasies. The result, we suggest, is the incorporation and transformation of previously civilian flesh into the military body. As such the preceding discussion has sought to augment the strand in the extant body-organization scholarship which empirically explores how bodies are rendered fit for work through deliberate organizational socialisation. We have done this by focusing on the production of the military body, which as suggested earlier represents a critical case given the demanding conditions of military labour and the specific kind of body work for which this body is apparently being prepared. The intensity of these socialisation processes is very obvious in the empirical material we have used.

However, once the body is made docile it must be kept so. For Foucault this is achieved through “the means of correct training”. That is to say, discipline does not cease once the body has been made useful and malleable. It must be continually worked on to ensure its proper functioning. This is achieved through “the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing of judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). To develop this idea, in the following section we focus on one specific bodily performance found in the representations of the military in *Jarhead* that functions as a form of discipline. This is the ways in which power/knowledge regimes enforce a masculine gender on military bodies, normalising these bodies as masculine. Following from our analysis of basic training above, and to reiterate one element of our contribution, we contend that the gendered disciplining which produces and sustains the military body can illuminate other less extreme instances of the socialisation and experience of the male-worker-body - and, as it turns out, the

female-worker-body as well.

### **The Gendered Body**

The military body is, first and foremost, a masculine body. However, fundamental to this gendered performance is the implicit and explicit invocation of the feminine body. The feminine serves a number of functions in the military and its mediatised representation in *Jarhead* and elsewhere: it is frequently employed as a gauge against which the masculine is measured or as a foil against which it can appear. Utilised in this way, gender categorisation creates separation and difference. As such it functions as a disciplining technique which seeks to 'normalise' (Foucault, 1977) the military body in carefully coded, masculine ways. The norm becomes an effect of power/knowledge and divergence from it becomes punishable. As Foucault (1977, p. 184) remarks:

Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogenous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank. ... In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual difference.

Let us outline how normalisation, as an instrument of power, operates in the military.

To do this we consider the metaphor of the feminine as it operates in and around the military in order to think through some of the ways in which the masculine body is normalised and maintained in this particular organizational context.

One deployment of this metaphor in the military is to position those who are weaker, less able or in some way subordinate or inferior when measured against the masculine

norm. As Barrett (2001, p. 82) notes, “Masculinity achieves meaning within patterns of differences. If success for men is associated with ‘not quitting’ in the face of hardships, femininity becomes associated with quitting, complaining, and weakness”. Signifiers such as ‘bitch’ or ‘pussy’ are regularly employed to refer to soldiers who cannot keep up or who fall behind; and in basic training new recruits are often referred to as ‘ladies’. In a crucial scene in *Jarhead*, during an altercation between Swofford and Fergus (another member of the platoon), Swofford continually berates Fergus for his weakness, enticing him to fire his weapon: “Shoot me you pussy!”, “Come on bitch! Do it!” he demands. Earlier, Sergeant Sykes, in explaining the purpose of a ‘live firing’ exercise, tells the men that it is a means of finding out “if we have any bitch in you!”

Indeed, it seems that, even when the military body is female, it must be made masculine. Höpfl’s (2003) insightful analysis of the film *GI Jane* (1996) tells us that “To become a member of the military body, a woman must either conform to the male projection offered to her or else acquire a metaphorical ‘member’ as the price of entry into ‘membership’” (p. 13). Höpfl’s reading of *GI Jane* argues that Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil, played by Demi Moore, only succeeds in her quest to become a Navy SEAL by, amongst other things, shaving her hair off, moving into the male barracks, smoking cigars, swearing profusely, sustaining a vicious beating at the hands of her commanding officer and, eventually, telling him to “suck my dick” (p. 25). As such, O’Neil has to all intents and purposes become a man and so “the film confirms the loss of the feminine and a complete incorporation into the male naval service culture” (p. 23). In another piece on *GI Jane*, Carver (2007) asserts that the film is “a deconstruction of what it is to be a man ... in order to show what something really is,

we need to know how it is created, and to do that most vividly, we start with something *that isn't a man at all* (namely a woman .... ) *and make it into one*" (p. 314). Carver goes on to ask "how does the training 'make a man' of [O'Neil], the way it 'makes a man' of the others (who are also men already)?" (p. 315). His answer is the ways in which it excludes everyone who cannot make the grade demanded of them by this brutal socialisation process – men and women alike.

The feminine not only serves to mark subordination however; it also signifies military defeat. Jeffords (1989), in her discussion of filmic representations of the Vietnam War, makes the point that numerous institutions and persons have 'taken the blame' for the defeat of the US forces at the hands of the Vietnamese. The earlier films, she suggests, laid blame on the soldiers themselves who were "not seen to measure up to the soldiers who had fought in previous wars" (p. 145). Later, as Vietnam became an increasingly popular site through which to re-present visions of war, so the political process of blame-shifting moved from the individual soldier onto the Vietnamese for the 'underhand' methods they employed. Later, blame shifted again, onto the US government. This was never more so than when Ronald Reagan, during his 1980 Presidential campaign, declared "Let us tell those who fought in that war that we will never again ask young men to fight and possibly die in a war our government is afraid to let us win" (cited in Storey, 2003, p. 100).

Irrespective of the group labelled as responsible and regardless of the justifications for such labelling, they all share commonalities in their representation. Specifically, Jeffords suggests, they are constructed on the screen in ways that denote the feminine, at least as it is typically articulated in American popular culture: "weakness,

indecisiveness, dependence, emotion, non-violence, negotiation, unpredictability, and deception” (1989: 146). Against the feminine stands the category of the masculine, one that “operates single-mindedly to accomplish what the feminine cannot – ‘winning’ the war.” (1989, p. 144). What Jeffords is arguing is that as re-presentations of the Vietnam conflict emerged not only were different parties constructed as ally or enemy, friend or foe, good or bad but also as masculine and feminine: the former being the force struggling to win the war and the latter being the force resisting or preventing the masculine quest.

This feminising of defeat does not just occur in popular cultural representations but is a metaphor and a practice deployed in actual combat. Jones (2006) argues that war itself is inherently feminising as indexed by practices in which defeated warriors are ‘stripped’ of their masculinity through castration or being forced to participate in sexual acts – simulated or otherwise. This scenario is played out in *Jarhead* when Kruger (Lucas Black) is caught sexually defiling a dead Iraqi soldier. Interestingly, Jones also notes how defeat in itself can even foster a more assertive masculine performance, with the German Freikorps in the aftermath of World War I or, more recently, what Jones describes as the “Rambo” masculinity that emerged in the United States after defeat in Vietnam being only two of the best-studied examples (p. 454).

In each of these instances, the masculine is configured in different ways in order to justify a particular hierarchical position, against which failure (coded as feminine) is measured. The particular relevance of this gendered hierarchical positioning to the discussion at hand can be seen when read against the notion of the cyborgian body below. In *Jarhead*, when the various forms of discipline undertaken in the

construction of the military body come into contact with the realities of war, so a tension develops between experience and expectation: one that might undermine the very foundation of the masculine military subject. To this we now turn.

### **The Cyborgian Body**

The third bodily performance that we wish to address, the cyborgian body, relates to the increasing deployment of technology on and through the material body and the emergence of the cyborgian soldier. Our interest here lies specifically in thinking through some of the ways in which “war has become cyborged” (Hables Gray, 2002, p. 216) and the implications of this relationship for the military subject - the cyborg soldier – and its overlaying of the gendering of that subject.

In order to understand more clearly the relationship between cyborgs and the military it is first necessary to consider how we might conceive of the cyborg in everyday life. The cyborg exists at the interface of the organic and the mechanical (and/or, increasingly, the digital). Any interaction between human and machine can constitute a cyborgian relationship: driving a car, putting up a shelf or wearing sunglasses are all cyborgian practices. No wonder, then, that Parker (2000) asserts “we are all already cyborgs. Our bodies are only ever given realization through their connection with non-human materials” (p. 75). In this relationship, however, neither the organic nor the machinic dominates. Both are needed in order to function as a cyborg: “The cyborg is the figure born of the interface of automaton and autonomy” (Haraway, 1991, p. 154).

### *The (Gendered) Military Cyborg*

The military has always been the home of cyborgs; the use of the crudest weapons and armour creating perhaps one of its earliest manifestations. Significant to the contemporary military, however, is the increasing practice of creating “a postmodern army of war machines, war managers, and robotized warriors” (Hables Gray, 1997, p. 196). The increasing use of machines does not, of course, completely replace the soldier on the ground, as current military operations in Afghanistan attest.

Indeed, so important is the material body that military research continues apace in this area, constantly seeking to improve and move beyond its physical limitations.

Through the manipulation of the human body, the application of weapons and various bits of machinery, a new construction of the military subject is emerging. Such developments, common to science fiction, are increasingly becoming part of routine military practice. Examples abound of such technologies: for example, “wired uniforms are now capable of monitoring heart and respiration rates.” (Armitage, 2003, p. 2). Others include helmet visors with night vision capabilities, weapons fitted with thermal imaging scopes, armour sensors that offer GPS but can also detect biological and chemical agents and even, as Hables Gray notes, “artificial bones, artificial blood, and spray-on skin for the wounded” (1997, pp. 215-216).

Significant to these processes of cyborgization (Parker and Cooper, 1998) in the military are their effects on the gendered construction of the military body. For Hables Gray (1997, p. 175), “as soldiers become more like cyborgs, their gendered identity becomes more blurred.” The cyborgian relationship between man and machine is apparently producing masculinities that differ from those constructed around the



soldier of the first half of the twentieth century. Mastery of complex technology replaces physical force. In this renegotiation of masculinity, Hables Gray argues, space opens up for more and more women to adopt a soldierly identity in which they can be equally competent at flying aircraft, launching missiles and deciphering information.

This is not to suggest that the military body is feminised, but that the female body can more easily occupy the space made available by the need for “technical warriors” (Hables Gray, 1997, p. 175). Clearly, such a possibility has important implications for the future of the military and its subjects. But the one that we wish to consider here, which emerges through our reading of *Jarhead*, is not the thesis that cyborgization could increasingly lead to the feminisation of the military. Nor do we wish to suggest that it will necessarily produce a more assertive masculinisation. Instead, we contend that - for some soldiers - cyborgization will result in their *demasculinisation*. A number of scenes in the film suggest this possibility.

Halfway through the narrative, our platoon of snipers, having waited months for the land war to start, having endured the harsh conditions of the desert and having been tested through constant and repetitive exercises, finally get their orders to move up to the front line in preparation for the invasion of Iraq. As they dig their sleep-holes, US jets fly overhead, and the following conversation takes place:

Fowler:	Fucking zoomies. They're gonna win the war all by themselves.
Cortez:	They'll be sleeping in their own beds tonight, too.
Escobar:	So what man? We're scout fucking snipers. When the shit hits the fan, we lead the fucking way. Ooh-rah!
Troy:	Sure, look around. You hear those planes. This war is gonna move too fast for us. Alright, we can shoot 1000 yards. To go that far in Vietnam would take a week. In World War One, a year. Here, it's gonna take about 10 fucking seconds. By the time we have our rifles dialled the war is going to be a mile down the road. Wake up! Jesus!

In this scene we see the beginnings of a conflict between the men on the ground and the preferred strategies of the military command. Troy recognises the future of warfare and the possibility that the snipers may not feature in it.

In *Jarhead* technological military supremacy can be read as a negative; at least from the point of view of the main protagonists. It will steal the glory that the platoon have relentlessly trained and waited for. In effect technology becomes the enemy, the enemy of their military masculinity. It takes away from the men their role, their identity as soldiers and as snipers. This point is reinforced in two further scenes. First, the platoon becomes the target of friendly fire, or as they refer to it “friendly fucking”. This is a metaphorical reinforcement of the tension building and of the positioning of technology as the enemy of military masculinity, for in being so fucked one is, in this discursive context, inevitably feminised. Second, in the final scene in the desert, Swofford and Troy are given a mission that requires them to move to an advanced position to take out two senior Iraqi officers currently operating out of a disused airport.

At last, here is their opportunity to fire their rifles, to engage their own cyborgian identity, to see some of the action that has thus far eluded them: to see “the pink mist”. They make their way to their target, get into position, identify their marks, receive permission to fire and settle in for the shot. Swofford moves his finger over the trigger, calms his breathing; after a moment’s reflection on the days, weeks, months and years of waiting for this moment, he begins to squeeze the trigger. Suddenly there is an explosion of noise. Major Lincoln bursts in on their position and orders them to stand down. Lincoln has decided to call in an air strike to wipe out the

entire airport complex where the Iraqi officers are holed up. The following dialogue takes place:

Lincoln: We got air. I'm calling it in.  
Swofford: We have permission to take the shot.  
Lincoln: Watch this, it'll blow your fucking minds.

[The major sits down in Swofford and Troy's observation post in a deck chair: "Bad knees. College football!" he explains as he raises his binoculars in readiness; more reminiscent of a spectator at a sporting event. At the realisation that they may be denied their glory, Troy and Swofford become physically unsettled; insistent that they been allowed to take the shot.]

Troy: Request permission to take the shot, Sir.  
Lincoln: Request denied. You never know how many chances you're gonna get to do this.

[Troy and Swofford continue to request permission – each time denied. Desperation starts to afflict their voices.]

Troy: Sir, just let us take this one shot right before the air comes in. We don't have to tell anybody. What difference does it make?

[The requests are continually denied as the urgency in Troy's voice increases.]

Troy: Goddamn it, he's dead anyway! Just let us fucking do it.

[Troy continues to become more upset and irate at the Major's failure to recognise their request.]

Troy: What difference does it make?  
Lincoln: If it doesn't make a fucking difference why the fuck do you have to do it?  
Troy: Because we have the goddamn shot. That's why we're here!

[The tension and aggression in the room builds. A standoff has developed – the single shot of the skilled sniper against the (greater) technological supremacy of the aerial bombs. Who gets to claim the kill?]

Troy: That's my kill! Fuck! That is my kill! That is my kill! You fucking desk jockey ... fucking prick. You don't know what we go through, hell!

[Swofford, by now, has had to restrain Troy. Troy collapses to the floor, hysterical, sobbing.]

Lincoln: You STA boys are some weird motherfuckers!

[Cut to a scene of US jets flying over and annihilating the airport complex, and everyone in it.]

The Major departs and Troy and Swofford are left to contemplate their situation. In the end, systemic technological power has won out against their individual skill with a more human scale of machine. The sniper, the lone cyborg figure with a single shot at his disposal is, in some senses, the last remnants of a previous warrior age. In *Jarhead* we see that image superseded and replaced by the destructive power of the aerial

bomb and an example of the strategy of high technology in warfare.

In the next scene, Troy and Swofford return to their base, only to find out that the war is over. They look at each other; they are bemused, resigned and deflated. They turn to one another and Swofford comments, almost in disbelief:

Swofford: I never shot my rifle.  
Troy: You do it now?

Swofford fires his rifle in the air. This action is copied by all those present, all those who never got to fire their weapons at the enemy. The soundtrack “Fight the Power” by Kane kicks in, the war is over ... and so is the film.

## **Conclusion**

We began this paper by asking how bodies become organized, how they become fit for work, and what the ensuing implications might be. Our reading of the film *Jarhead*, itself based on the account of a former soldier, has allowed us to recognise some of the means by which this is achieved in the organizational context of the military. First, we have observed that the body that emerges in the military is a disciplined and docile one: it has been made malleable and useful, apparently so as to play its part in the proper functioning of the organization. Second, the military body is also always masculine, even when it is female. The feminine occupies a position against which the masculine is measured and from which it is differentiated. Thus it is inevitably subordinate. Third, in the contemporary military the body is infused with technology on a level previously unprecedented. Whilst this may appear to make the body more efficient and effective, and therefore be perceived as a positive intervention in terms of gender equality in this context, our reading of *Jarhead* leads

to an alternative and somewhat revealing conclusion.

In *Jarhead* the use of technology, at least for our band of scout snipers, is seen as negative. It prevents them from fully enacting the body labour for which they have been so relentlessly prepared. They are being 'friendly fucked', again. However, if we pause for a moment and think about the final scenes of the film then Troy's hysteria at not being allowed to take the shot seems initially to be completely irrational, given that his anger stems from not being allowed to kill another human being. How might we explain such a reaction? For us, the answer lies precisely in the ruthless efficiency through which the military is able to produce its docile masculine bodies.

You will recall that an underlying concern that drives our research on this organization centres on how military subjects are made, encouraged and/or forced to become able and willing to undertake the labour which they are apparently employed to deliver - to engage in armed combat and possibly to kill others. Indeed in *Jarhead* the disciplining and normalising practices enacted on and through military bodies are so effective that they have superseded 'civilian' concerns about the value of life. For these scout snipers firing their weapons with a view to the taking of life is their reward, their job, their duty; something for which they have endlessly trained. But at a time when the US military especially is moving increasingly toward a doctrine of high technology and the deployment of cyborgian entities utilising even more highly complex and sophisticated technology, often only remotely connected to the theatre of war, our lone warriors are stripped of their professional identity. They have been, in a sense, made impotent, unable to shoot their load. They are unable to prove themselves as warriors and as such central aspects of their masculinity - which have been

disciplined into them since they first entered the military barracks - are stripped from them. What is a warrior that cannot fire his weapon? It is only once the war is over that these men are able to do so; to exert their manhood. But ultimately they are firing blanks. There is no target, no purpose to the shot. There will be no pink mist.

This is perhaps the most illuminating finding revealed in *Jarhead's* narrative of military bodies. In short, the (non)experience of a (non)war by these impotent warriors prevents them from enacting their labour. These docile bodies that are made fit for purpose appear to have no purpose for which to be fit. As such the disciplining and gendering so fundamental to shaping the military body becomes subservient to the cyborgian technology of war. The punishing routines and endless exercises, the control of activity, the ritual humiliation and constant need to assert one's military masculinity are always based on the promise, the expectation, that the military will offer the kinds of extreme and unique experiences that could never be achieved in civilian life. But the promise can no longer be guaranteed.

As such what emerges from our analysis is more than just an addition to the empirical body-organization literature on male-worker-bodies, even though the occupation of soldier is such a critical case in this regard. Our thesis here is that contemporary military socialisation might actually create bodies which, as Burke famously has it, are "unfitted by being fit in an unfit fitness ... their past training has caused them to misjudge their present situation. Their training has become an incapacity" (1984, p. 10). This *embodied form* of unfit fitness, of what Dewey calls occupational psychosis and Warnotte professional deformation (see Merton, 1940, p. 562), takes us beyond the terrain of the extant body-organization scholarship. In *Jarhead* we see vividly how

men are expected to manage, use and present their bodies for their occupational role as soldier. We see them being encouraged to play on and augment supposedly natural male characteristics. However, we do not see any evidence of resistance to the military's bodily norms, but instead what seems to be a process of very thorough subjectification, of hyper-effective, practically seamless discipline. And this process, in the final analysis, is *dysfunctional* – to the extent in fact that it produces Troy's hysterical response (a form of resistance in itself) to Lincoln because he is not permitted to 'take the shot'. The docile bodies of the *Jarhead* platoon and the ways in which they are unfitted by being made fit may therefore provide us with an additional lens through which to apprehend the limits of bodily discipline as an organizing practice – not via the concept of resistance, but by scrutinizing the kinds of docility it produces.

Moreover, these issues are all the more pertinent at a time when conceptions of the military, and of the soldier, are being re-evaluated and redefined. Disciplining and normalising the docile body for 'appropriate' military performance – if indeed it produces the Burkeian unfit fitness which we identify here - may become as absorbing a problem for our military forces as success in any number of wars on terror, religious fundamentalism and other abstract nouns.

## Notes

1. A notable exception is Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), which follows a similar narrative structure to *Jarhead*.

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